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DD/R - NRO (OX & DOD development of RX)

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3 December 1962

Memo for DCI from DD/R (HSJr.) Subj: Advanced Recon Systems

1. It has recently come to my attention as a result of discussions with WHouse staff personnel that the DOD defense for the development of an RX is based primarily on the requirement for a pre-strike reconnaissance. Thus, it would appear that this system is just another intelligence collection system and is in many respects duplicative of the functions of the A-12.

2. I discussed this matter with Dr. Charyk and pointed out that this was certainly a matter which was of vital interest to you as DCI and questioned why he as head of the NRO had not seen fit to inform you or CIA of this development prior to its submission to the President. When he stated that the program was in the early consideration stage and that he also currently had a group working on the requirements for such a system, I also pointed out that the NRO was to be responsive only to the requirements of USIB and that I felt the intelligence community would have a very useful input in developing the basis for such a development were it needed. He indicated that he considered this to be different since this was in response to a JCS need and he could not consider that this should be submitted for USIB consideration or that CIA should participate in this work until he had discussed the matter with the Secretary of Defense.

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3. I believe that this is a very serious situation in that it appears that the DOD is bypassing you and the entire intelligence community in going forward with a development of what could be a major intelligence collection system. This same type of approach was what caused so much difficulty with the [REDACTED] system). In that case the AF went ahead with this development without any reference to the intelligence community and hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted until such a time as USIB was brought into the act as the result of direct White House pressure. In this connection a parallel situation exists in the satellite field in that SAC is presently conducting a study on the development of an independent CORONA capability for obtaining satellite photography in crisis situations. This study is to be completed shortly, and I also expressed my views to Dr. Charyk that you and CIA should be involved in the decision on proceeding. Again, he indicated that he could not make any commitment in this respect since this was a JCS need, and this would be a decision for the Secretary of Defense.

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4. I strongly recommend that in your discussions with Mr. McNamara relative to the NRO that you make it very clear on your desire to participate in these activities prior to final decisions being made and that in the future recommendations not be made to the White House on critical intelligence systems without your having had an opportunity to establish your views.

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